United Nations A/58/430

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 October 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 25
University for Peace

University for Peace

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report provides details on the progress made in revitalizing the University for Peace, especially with regard to the development and implementation of its academic programme and expanding its scope worldwide. As part of the five-year programme of expansion and revitalization, a new academic programme has been designed and is now being implemented at the campus in Costa Rica, including five new master's degree programmes on peace and security issues and a number of short courses for mid-career professionals. The course materials will be disseminated to partner universities worldwide so that students can study the central issues of peace and security at their home universities. An increasing number of donors has provided financial support to launch and sustain the innovative academic programme. However, full implementation of the programme and its global expansion depend on strong and continued financial support in the years to come.

* The document was submitted late to conference services without the explanation required under para. 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in the footnote to the document.

03-55361 (E) 271003

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I. Introduction

1. The University for Peace was established in 1980, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/55 in order to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace and with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. It is headquartered on the outskirts of San José, Costa Rica.

2. Established in conformity with an international agreement endorsed by the General Assembly, the University has a high degree of operating autonomy and flexibility, which enables it to serve as a link between the academic, governmental and non-governmental constituencies in addressing peace and security issues through education, training and research. It is governed by a Council appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in consultation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

3. In its resolution 56/2, the General Assembly noted the actions taken by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO and with the support of the Government of Costa Rica, to revitalize the University. The Assembly invited Member States to accede to the International Agreement for the Establishment of the University for Peace (see resolution 35/55, annex) and requested the Secretary-General to consider using the services of the University in his conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts and in the promotion of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. It also invited Member States, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interested individuals to provide financial support to the University.

4. As part of the continuing process of reform, the Secretary-General has taken measures to strengthen the University for Peace and extend its activities to all regions of the world. Since 2001, a strategy for the expansion of the University's activities and for the enhancement of its academic programme has been implemented to make the University a focus of global efforts in education, training and research for peace, and to enable it to respond more effectively to the global mission mandated to it by the General Assembly.

5. The present report is submitted by the Secretary-General to facilitate the General Assembly's consideration of the item entitled "University of Peace" at its fifty-eighth session.

II. Development and implementation of the academic programme

6. Since 2001, the University for Peace has made substantial progress towards two main objectives in line with its mandate from the General Assembly, and the decisions of the University's Council. These two objectives are: to build a high-quality academic programme of education, training and research on critical issues of

peace and security, and, in parallel, to extend the programme into different regions of the world through its network of partner institutions.

7. A multicultural, modular academic programme on key issues in the field of education for peace is being developed, including the methodology and strategy for disseminating course materials to partner universities throughout the world. The academic programme includes four main components:

A. Teaching at headquarters

8. The five new master's degree programmes now being offered at headquarters are on: human rights; international law and the settlement of disputes; international peace studies; gender and peace-building; and sustainable development and natural resources, the latter being a dual-degree programme in partnership with the School of International Service at American University, Washington, D.C. Some 80 students from all over the world are now following these five master's degree programmes in the 2003-2004 academic year. The number of students is expected to exceed 100 in the academic year 2004-2005.

9. The programme on international peace studies, launched in September 2003, is a key element in the University's academic programme. The foundation course in international peace studies is of particular interest since it has been developed through a process of international consultation, for inclusion in all of the University's programmes and for dissemination to other universities. As the academic programme is being developed on a modular basis, common elements within the different master's degree programmes have been incorporated into the foundation course, which will be compulsory for students in all of the University's programmes, in accordance with resolution 35/55 which established the University.

10. Progress has also been made to develop teaching modules, courses and programmes in certain fields, particularly: economic development and peace; environmental security; youth, employment and violence; and the media, peace and security. At a later stage, a master's degree programme on disarmament and non-proliferation education will be launched, based on a specific new mandate from the General Assembly. A number of short courses have also been taught in the past year on: economic development and peace; gender and peace-building; disability; human security; small arms; human rights and religion; and the management of natural resources. a semester abroad programme on conflict and peace studies has been developed at the undergraduate level to be taught at the main campus beginning in 2004.

B. Teaching at other locations

11. Courses have also been introduced at locations away from headquarters. At the Central European University in Budapest, a three-month course in peace and conflict studies has been taught in 2002 and 2003 to senior academics from Central Asia, who are now teaching the course at their home universities. In addition, two short courses for professionals have been taught at Mahidol University, Bangkok, in July 2003 as part of the Asia and Pacific programme, entitled "Environmental Security and Natural Resource Conflicts — New Vulnerability and New Vigilance",

attended by 55 participants from 18 Asia and Pacific countries; and "Religion: Conflict or Peace?", attended by 47 participants from 10 countries in the region.

C. Development and dissemination of course materials

12. Further to the development of the content of the five master's degree programmes, the main thrust of the expansion process will be to disseminate teaching materials, courses and modules, using state-of-the art technologies, to partner universities worldwide for the instruction of peace and conflict studies. By disseminating multicultural knowledge with United Nations provenance to thousands of young leaders and teachers, the University can make a substantial contribution to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, creating a substantial multiplier effect and, making it possible for large numbers of students in their home universities to study specific issues, including: conflict prevention, mediation, peace-building, human rights, and gender issues. Specific partner universities in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Asia and the Pacific, have been identified as being ready to use the University's course materials, when available.

D. Distance education

13. As course content becomes available, activities are being accelerated in the field of education and information technologies. A programme of distance education, "UPEACE GlobalEd", is under development, offering web-based teaching in the major fields that are the focus of the University's programme. The web site has been improved and all teaching activities as well as the library presently have full information and communication technologies (ICT) support.

III. Expanding the University programme globally

14. In line with its mandate, the University's programme is being extended to other regions of the world.

15. With initial support from the Netherlands and Denmark, and subsequently from Norway and Sweden, a substantial programme to strengthen education for peace in Africa has been developed through in-depth missions to 10 countries to consult, inter alia, with academics, civil society leaders, researchers, officials, and the military. As a result, a unique body of knowledge has been accumulated on research and teaching activities in Africa and on the practical needs for, and obstacles to, strengthening capacities in the field of education, training and research for peace. A strong network of motivated partner institutions in Africa has been established, which has led to the design of a major five-year programme of support to African universities to build up their capacities to teach and research the vital issues, inter alia, conflict prevention, peace-building, reconciliation and human rights.

16. As referred to in paragraph 11 above, the University has also launched a programme focused on education for peace in Central Asia with the support of Denmark, Norway and the United States of America. Based on the experience

gained from the pilot year, a three-year programme has been designed. This includes a teaching programme on peace and conflict studies at the Central European University in Budapest, further meetings of the regional forum on education for conflict resolution in Central Asia and the extension of teaching to the local level in Tajikistan and in other countries in the region. The approximately 25 academics from Central Asian universities who followed the intensive University for Peace courses in 2002 and the first half of 2003 at the Central European University in Budapest, have returned to their countries and have started teaching what they learned. This demonstrates the validity of the University's approach and the positive results that can be rapidly achieved.

17. A regional programme is also being developed for Asia and the Pacific. The first step was to bring together a wide network of key universities and form the Asia Pacific University Network for Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building. The second meeting to consolidate the Network was co-hosted by Tsinghua University in Beijing in June 2002. The two Inter-University Short Executive Programmes conducted at Mahidol University, Bangkok, in July 2003 on "Environmental Security and Natural Resource Conflicts" and "Religion: Conflict or Peace?" drew on the expertise of the Network members. The comprehensive course materials will be used to augment curricula in the member universities of the Network as well as to help initiate the development of courses in the participating universities.

18. A programme has also been designed for Latin America, focusing primarily on practical measures to improve human security in the region. It will be linked to two related issues: improving the performance of the police and the security services and redefining the role of the military; and mobilizing the business and financial communities to improve employment prospects and to strengthen stability and security. The programme will emphasize three main areas: strengthening education and training for peace in Latin American universities and training institutions; stimulating research to identify more clearly the underlying causes of instability and violence; and strengthening the base of information and indicators on issues related to violence and the preservation of stability and peace.

19. Within the above framework, a number of activities are already under way. The University for Peace-affiliated World Centre for Information and Research on Peace in Montevideo is undertaking a range of specific activities in partnership with an extensive network of universities and institutions throughout the region. The University for Peace-linked World Centre for Research and Training in Conflict Resolution in Bogota is now initiating its programme with the full engagement of the Colombian Government. Two programmes are under way in Central America on human security, with support from Italy, and on civil/military relations, supported by Denmark. Funds are now being sought to launch the pilot year of the full programme in Latin America.

IV. Institutional development

20. Considerable progress has been made in the last two years to modernize the University by installing administrative, financial and auditing systems that meet international standards. A complete academic administrative system has been created to register and keep track of current as well as prospective students.

21. In March 2002, the University was evaluated for one week by a mission of four experts from the Government of Germany. Based on its positive assessment, Germany has committed 1 million euros for course development.

22. The 2002-2003 master's degree programmes in international law and in human rights also received very favourable reviews from an independent evaluator, who stated that they clearly indicated a stimulating and supportive intellectual environment and a high standard of candidate selection and student performance. The aforementioned assessments demonstrate that the management, administration, academic programme development and implementation and financial systems of the University meet international standards. The University's Academic Advisory Council, an international group of 12 distinguished academics, has been established to guide the development and quality of the academic programme. Its inaugural meeting was held in Stockholm in May 2003.

V. Resource situation

23. The University for Peace receives no direct financial support from the United Nations. It must seek financial assistance from Governments, NGOs and philanthropic foundations. Despite the difficult resource environment, the University has been able to raise funds for the rapid development and expansion of its programmes as a result of the support of a number of donors who provided, and continue to provide, the resources needed for the development of the institution and its academic programme.

24. As progress has become evident in developing and implementing its academic programme and strengthening its management, the credibility of the University, both with donors and with partners, has improved. Ten countries are now contributing to the University programme: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Several other donors are expected to lend their support soon. Funds have also been contributed by the United Nations Foundation, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Philanthropic Collaborative, the Dutch National Postcode Lottery and others. The Government of Costa Rica has, over the years, also provided support in developing and sustaining the University.

A. Support in the revitalization process

25. In the initial preparatory phase, the United Nations Foundation made a generous grant of $2 million to the University. The Canadian International Development Agency has also provided a central contribution of $4.5 million Canadian dollars over a three-year period, part of which was used for institutional development and support. Other donors have contributed to the stabilization and revitalization of the University, including UNDP, the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund and the Philanthropic Collaborative. The Dutch National Postcode Lottery has provided sustained support over the last two years to the core budget, as have the Governments of Norway and Sweden. Several other Governments have indicated their willingness to do the same.

B. Support to the academic programme

26. Various Governments have provided support to the University's academic programme. The Netherlands has generously funded the pilot year (2002) of the major Africa programme, which has successfully engaged African scholars and experts in the definition and formulation of a long-term programme to build capacities in Africa for teaching peace and conflict studies. The five-year programme, developed with Dutch and Danish support, has been launched with additional support from Norway and Sweden.

27. Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United States have funded the initial year of the regional programme on education for conflict resolution in Central Asia. The Government of Finland is strongly supporting the new master's degree programme in gender and peace-building. Germany is providing support for course development in the fields of international peace studies and peace education. The International Development Research Centre in Canada has provided consistent support to the natural resources programme of the University.

C. The University for Peace scholarship programme

28. The University has established a scholarship programme that will provide financial assistance to qualified and deserving students for high-quality education in the field of peace and conflict studies. Contributions to the scholarship fund will enable a new generation of teachers and leaders from developing countries to acquire knowledge and skills for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict and the building of peace. Highly qualified and deserving students from developing countries will be granted partial or full scholarships, depending on their abilities.

29. The scholarship fund was initiated for the 2002-2003 academic year through a generous multi-year grant from Professor Steven Rockefeller. Scholarships are also being funded in the 2003-2004 academic year by Germany for the programmes in peace studies and for education for peace-building. The University also offers scholarships to students attending the master's degree programme in gender and peace-building, owing to the support of Finland.

VI. Conclusion

30. **Through education for peace, the academic programme of the University addresses the root causes of prejudice, hatred and conflict in a targeted, practical manner, strengthening resources of knowledge and expertise, which are urgently needed to promote peace and non-violence. Over a period of time, an increasing number of students will gain excellent qualifications in peace and conflict studies. A network of students, academics, teachers and researchers and of active and expert men and women working for peace in different countries across the world will rapidly be built up. This will make a significant contribution to strengthening teaching and research capacities for peace in developing countries — a priority of the University for Peace in accordance with its mandate from the General Assembly.**

31. **By December 2005, the five-year development strategy for the University will have been concluded: the first phase of development of the academic programme will be completed; the programme will be significantly financed from tuition and scholarship fees; the regional activities will be self-sustaining; and the distance education programme will be revenue generating.**

32. **The full implementation and success of the mission of the University is dependent on the broad support of a greater number of Governments acceding to the International Agreement for the Establishment of the University for Peace, and also on the availability of the necessary financial resources for the institutional functioning of the University and the implementation and dissemination of its academic programme.**